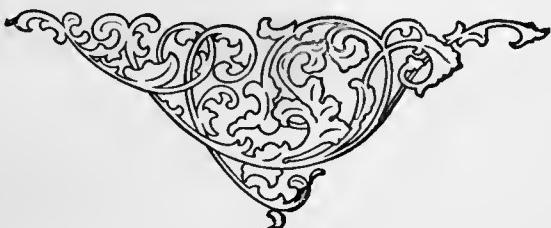


HOW MARK TWAIN

WAS MADE

By
GEORGE WHARTON JAMES



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How Mark Twain was Made

By George
Wharton
James

Author of "Through Ramona's Country," "The Heroes of California," "The California Birthday Book," "The Wonders of the Colorado Desert," "In and Out of the Old Mansions of California," etc.



HT the time of their endurance, most men would forego the hardships of life for something easier. Yet the experiences of the ages teach that it is the difficulties and obstacles of life *overcome* that develop or "make" the man. Necessarily many things go to the making of any man, especially if he attain to eminence in any walk of life. Many factors are to be considered, such as heredity, natural temperament, the environments of early life, the force of exterior circumstances, the fortuitous arrangement of things and events of which the man of genius is able to take hold and mold to his own purpose. And by no means least in its importance, if his work is for the fickle public, is the factor of his striking such a vein as is permanently popular and constantly satisfying.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, known only to the world, however, as Mark Twain, first saw the light of day November 30, 1835, in the hamlet of Florida, Missouri. At this time, in the whole region west of the Mississippi River, which now con-

tains thirty millions of people, or more, there were less than half a million white inhabitants. St. Louis was the only city west of the Mississippi and it had no more than ten thousand inhabitants.

In this great and wonderful western land, with its possibilities scarcely beginning to dawn upon its people, and with the great Mississippi River close at hand, Mark Twain lived his early life. His father died when he was twelve years old and all the scholastic education he received was given him prior to that time. Henceforth the world was to be his school, college and university, and it is another evidence of the power of untrammelled genius that Mark Twain won from the greatest universities of the world the highest honors for his attainments in literature, without having studied in any of them.

As his biographer has well said: "It is fortunate indeed for literature that Mark Twain was never ground into smooth uniformity under the scholastic emery wheel. He has made the world his university, and in men, and books,

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and strange places, and all the phases of an infinitely varied life, has built an education broad and deep, on the foundations of an undisturbed individuality."

For a short time he assisted his brother Orion as printer's devil in a newspaper office where he learned to set type. He filled up his spare time by wandering with his village companions, and about this time he had been pulled out, in a nearly drowned condition, three times from the "Father of Waters" and six times from Bear Creek.

When he was eighteen years of age,

words that Mark Twain himself used to describe the responsibility and the extensive training of the faculties of observation and memory essential to the making of a pilot to realize how absurd such a charge must be.

What a schooling for a young and impressionable boy with an undeveloped and powerful genius unconsciously alert to take in impressions, his profession disciplining his memory to retain all that varied, wonderful, large and picturesque life on and about the Mississippi River which he afterward so wonderfully



A TYPICAL RIVER STEAMBOAT WITH WHICH MARK TWAIN'S NAME WILL EVER BE ASSOCIATED

the "wanderlust" struck him and for a time he rambled through the Eastern States supporting himself as a tramp printer. Then for a time, he lived in St. Louis, Muscatine and Keokuk, until 1857, when he persuaded one of the most noted Mississippi River pilots, Horace Bixby, to teach him the mysteries of steamboat piloting.

In the fact that Mark Twain submitted himself to the tremendous discipline necessary to this task is the best proof of his inherent love of work. He always accused himself of laziness, and I have heard scores of people re-echo the charge, but one has only to realize the full force of

reproduced in "Tom Sawyer," "Huckleberry Finn," "Pudd'n Head Wilson" and "Life on the Mississippi."

In 1861 this part of his life closed forever. The Civil War broke out and ruined steamboating on the Mississippi. Living in the South, his sympathies were naturally with the Confederates, although his brother Orion was already a somewhat prominent Northern politician. For a short time, Mark served in a company of Missouri rangers, and he afterward made his exploits at that time the occasion for an article full of good-natured humor pointed at himself and his companions. He was captured but escaped, and his brother

Orion, having received an appointment as the secretary of the new territory of Nevada, he was invited to accompany him, doubtless as an effectual plan of removing him from the possibility of any further mischief.

Mark's account of the overland stage trip across the plains is one of the most painstaking and truthful pieces of literary work he ever accomplished. There is nothing in literature comparable to it as an absolutely accurate account of that wonderful eighteen days' stage ride. It forms the chief part of the first volume of "Roughing It," a book full of his western experiences. It will ultimately be used as an historical and literary text book in every Western school, college and university that wishes to preserve to its students the memory of those remarkable and heroic days "when there were giants in the land."

When the brothers arrived at Carson City, Nevada, Mark found his duties *nil*, and his salary *ditto*, so he was easily induced to visit one of the mining camps not far away and there try his hand at a fresh venture. Now began a new life as large, wild, open, picturesque, rugged and fantastic as had been his life on the Mississippi. It was ultimately to lead him into California and across the Pacific to the Sandwich Islands and thus add another tremendous treasure of material to his observing mind and fecund genius, to work up into stories and books of exquisite flavor for the delectation of the literature and humor-loving epicures of the world.

Yet here began some of the sterner elements of Mark Twain's making. It was on the Pacific coast that not only was his genius awakened, but his manhood aroused, fortified, strengthened and set definitely upon the path upon which he ever afterwards faithfully and devotedly walked. As Browning eloquently puts it, it was a fierce "dance of plastic circumstance," and the wheel of life upon which the Divine Potter placed him "spun dizzily," so it is not to be wondered at that his, as yet, unawakened mind would have been glad to arrest it and escape.

Times were hard in the new mining

camp, and Mark and his partner accomplished little. With his newspaper experience he naturally gravitated to the local newspaper office, which he once in a while favored with an original contribution. At last he ventured to send occasional items to the *Territorial Enterprise* at Virginia City, then edited by Joseph T. Goodman, who is still living in Oakland, California. Goodman was a man of keen and unerring literary instinct and immediately recognized in his unknown correspondent a man of power, so he invited him to come and take up regular work upon the paper.

One day he was surprised by a young man, wearing a dilapidated hat, miner's overalls, hickory shirt, and heavy clumping shoes, carrying a roll of dirty blankets on his back, walking into the office, with a quaint drawling salutation to the effect that he had "come according to instructions duly received." It took a little time for Goodman to realize that the rough and uncouth-looking miner was the correspondent upon whose letters he had begun to base high literary hopes.

And there it was on the steep slopes on Mount Davidson, above the wonderful Comstock lode, so that mines were the main subject of business, recreation, conversation and endeavor, he began the literary career that was ultimately to make his name as familiar as household words, give him a large place in the hearts of many millions of people and establish his fame forevermore.

Associated with him were Goodman, Rollin M. Daggett and William Wright, known to the world as Dan de Quille. Nearly thirty years ago, when I went to Virginia City, I learned to know Wright well, and now and again he would get into a reminiscent mood and tell stories about Mark. One story he always enjoyed telling and chuckled considerably over was about the time when Mark's associates presented him with a meerschaum pipe that he much coveted.

One day there was exhibited in one of the store windows of the camp an elaborate pipe, of German make—one of those large, carved, old-fashioned pipes that brings before you a picture of a Dutch burgomaster with his stein of beer on the

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table at his elbow. Mark saw this pipe and coveted it. As he and Dan went to lunch, Mark would stop, and in his slow, drawling fashion, comment on that pipe. But the price—one hundred dollars—placed it far out of reach.

Mark was an inveterate smoker, and he had the vilest, worst-smelling pipe in Virginia City, and though printers are not, as a rule, squeamish about such things, this pipe was a little too much for them, and they always spoke of it as "the remains." So, putting this and that together, Wright saw a way of getting rid of "the remains," playing a good joke on Mark in return for jokes in which he had been the victim, and giving "the boys" some fun. Dan was "no slouch of a wag"—as they used to say of him in Virginia City. This was the scheme he concocted:

Someone in town was found who made a dummy copy of the pipe Mark coveted, but fixed it in a way that it would fall to pieces—melt in places—and the bowl split whenever anyone attempted to use it. This pipe was to be given to Mark by the "boys of the printing office" as a surprise. They were to give him a dinner or something of the kind, and Dan was "let into the secret," so that on the "strict Q. T." he might whisper it to Mark, in order that the latter might be ready to respond with a bright and witty speech, which, delivered as a purely extemporaneous effort, would "bring down the house."

Mark fell into the trap as innocently as a "sucking duck"—to use Dan's expression, and on the appointed night, when the work on the paper was all done, the boys from "the rear" and the reporters and writers from "the front" went over, with a good deal of solemnity and respect, to where the spread was laid out. After dinner, when all were feeling good, one of the party made the presentation speech. He talked about the wearisome, brain-racking work of journalism, and the long hours of labor under the silent, serene stars of the midnight sky, when all the rest of the world was sweetly wrapped in profound slumber, enjoying well-earned rest. Then he stole a few ideas (in advance of publication)

from Barrie's *My Lady Nicotine*, and dashed off into a flowing eulogy of the soothing effect of tobacco upon the exhausted and wearied brain, and, as a final crash of eloquence, spoke feelingly and touchingly of the happy and cordial relations that had always existed between the news department and the composing room, and hoped that nothing would ever occur to sever the silken ties, etc., etc. Then, amid loud applause, he handed Mark the thirty-cent fraud. Of course, Mark was taken entirely by surprise, and he was delighted in the extreme, and "too much moved to say anything." He seemed to be "knocked into a cocked hat," but by and by he pulled himself together, and began his carefully prepared extempore speech. He thanked the boys for their gift—it had touched him deeply—he would ever retain it as a pleasant souvenir of many happy days, and especially this day, one of the happiest of his life. Then, and here was what the boys cheered, he went on to speak of his old pipe, told how it had been the solace of many lonely hours, had come with him across the plains, etc., but this new and handsome gift from friends he had learned to love made parting from it easy, and—this had been suggested by Wright as a brilliant and dramatic climax to the extemporaneous effort—therefore, he would cast it away. And, suiting the action to the word, he threw it out of the window, and then invited the boys to "take something with him."

They accepted, of course, and filled Mark full with their naive and open expressions of joy at his fine speech. How delighted they were with it, and how they congratulated him upon his great gift, and wondered "how on earth he could do it." "What a wonderful gift it was, and how they envied him, that he could get up on his feet and make so bright and witty a speech off-hand," etc., etc., *ad libitum*. Mark took it all in at its face value and was tickled and flattered from top to toe, for it has never been denied that he had the ordinary man's vanity and love of approbation, and all went well as a marriage bell.

Mark, however, wanted to try his

pipe, and there was the rock upon which the conspiracy came near splitting. The conspirators did, however, persuade him not to "spoil his new pipe" then, but wait until he got home. He was finally helped home in a cab, and three or four of the most interested—and most sober—waited outside his door to hear the fun.

But when he got to this part of the story, Dan for a time could never get any further for laughing.

Mark charged and lit the pipe, and it was not long before the expected happened. The bowl split open from stem to stern, and the whole thing fell apart, and the peeping conspirators heard him growling to himself in phraseology that was neither fit for a Sunday-school book nor for the pages of this reputable family journal, while he petulantly brushed the hot ashes from his clothes and writing table.

He never said a word to a soul about the pipe or whatever became of it, and none of the boys ever said anything to him, but the joke was on them, for the following day, when he appeared at the office, he had "the remains" in his mouth. They had forgotten to remove it and Mark had gone out, hunted it up and restored it to its old place in his favor. Dan says Mark was never "real genial" with him from that time.

It was while he was in Virginia City that he wrote two satires or burlesques that, when one understands their local application, are excruciatingly funny. They are both included in his "Sketches New and Old" and one of them, "The Petrified Man," is a never-ending source of delight to thousands. There had been a great craze for digging up petrifications and other marvels, and as Mark says: "The mania was becoming a little ridiculous. I was a bran-new local editor in Virginia City, and I felt called upon to destroy this growing evil; we all have our benignant fatherly moods at one time or another, I suppose. I chose to kill the petrifaction mania with a delicate, a very delicate satire. But maybe it was altogether too delicate, for nobody ever perceived the satire part of it at all. I put my scheme in the shape of the discovery of a remarkably petrified man."

In the account written for his paper

he stated, with all the circumstantiality of detail that the conscientious reporter shows, how that the petrification had been discovered at Gravelly Ford, about one hundred and twenty-five miles away, over a breakneck mountain trail. He had had a quarrel with the Coroner, so he determined to make him ridiculous by telling how he had impanelled a jury and they had visited the scene of the discovery, held an inquest on the "remains" and returned a verdict that the deceased had come to his death from *protracted exposure*.

The whole thing was a screaming burlesque from beginning to end, and if any one had read carefully he would have seen from the description of the posture of the hands of the petrified man that it was so. But the thing was done so ingeniously that nobody "tumbled," and the result was that Mark's petrified man went the rounds of the press of the civilized world and finally came back to him from the *London Lancet*.

If one has not read "The Petrified Man" and has any sense of humor in him, the sooner he gets to it, the better.

Soon after he arrived in Virginia City he was sent to Carson City as the paper's correspondent from the territorial legislature which was then in session. It was here that his peculiar humor first began to be noticed, for personalities were the fashion in those days, and Mark's were singularly effective if irritation and anger are a proof of effectiveness.

Many things that Mark wrote for the *Enterprise* are worth republishing and some day, perhaps, some indefatigable searcher will hunt them out and give them to the world. Here is one, however, quoted by Mrs. Ella Cummins-Mighels and her comments thereon: "In his work upon the *Enterprise* was a bit of literary criticism which has passed into a familiar saying, to be handed down from father to son, and mother to daughter. Upon the death of Lincoln many obituary poems sprang into print, among them one which took the fancy of Mark Twain who set it off thus:

'Gone, gone, gone,
Gone to his endeavor;
Gone, gone, gone,
Forever and forever.'

"This is a very nice refrain to this little poem. But if there is any criticism to make upon it, I should say that there was a little too much 'gone' and not enough 'forever.' And to this day it is used as a case in point relating to a superfluity of any kind."

A man whom Mark became very fond of was Jack Perry, the deputy sheriff of the camp in the early days, when it was common to have a "man for breakfast" every morning. Jack was a tall, good-natured, shrewd-witted, humorous fellow, totally unacquainted with the meaning of the word "fear," and a worthy foil for Mark's peculiar style of wit. It was Jack who told several of the stories that appear in "*Roughing It*" and also was the author of the "Blue Jay" story to which Mark devotes a whole chapter in "*A Tramp Abroad*." I knew Jack intimately during my seven years of Nevada life and have listened many times to his interesting recital of this and other stories with which he used to beguile the hours when he and Mark had nothing else to do in Virginia City.

In introducing this story, Mark gives the following as a sample of the comments that led to the story. He gives the name of Jim Barker to the story-teller and places the scene in California: "There's more to a bluejay than any other creature. He has got more moods, and more different kinds of feelings than any other creature; and, mind you, whatever a bluejay feels, he can put into language. And no mere commonplace language, either, but rattling out-and-out book talk—and bristling with metaphor, too—just bristling. And as for command of language—why, you never see a bluejay get stuck for a word. No man ever did. They just boil out of him. And another thing: I have noticed a good deal, and there's no bird, or cow, or anything that uses as good grammar as a bluejay. You may say a cat uses good grammar. Well, a cat does—but you let a cat get excited once; you let a cat get to pulling fur with another cat on a shed, nights, and you'll hear grammar that will give you the lockjaw. Ignorant people think it is the *noise* which fighting cats make that is so aggravating, but it ain't so; it's

the sickening grammar that they use. Now I've never heard a jay use bad grammar but very seldom; and when they do, they are as ashamed as a human; they shut right down and leave.

"You may call a jay a bird. Well, so he is, in a measure—because he's got feathers on him, and don't belong to no church, perhaps; but otherwise he is just as much a human as you be. And I'll tell you for why. A jay's gifts and instincts, and feelings, and interests, cover the whole ground. A jay hasn't got any more principle than a Congressman. A jay will lie, a jay will steal, a jay will deceive, a jay will betray; and four times out of five, a jay will go back on his solemnest promise. The sacredness of an obligation is a thing which you can't cram into no bluejay's head. Now, on top of all this, there's another thing; a jay can outwear any gentleman in the mines. You think a cat can swear. Well, a cat can; but you give a bluejay a subject that calls for his reserve powers and where is your cat? Don't talk to me—I know too much about this thing. And there's yet another thing; in one little particular of scolding—just good, clean, out-and-out scolding—a bluejay can lay over anything human or divine. Yes, sir, a jay is everything that a man is. A jay can cry, a jay can laugh, a jay can feel shame, a jay can reason and plan and discuss, a jay likes gossip and scandal, a jay has got a sense of humor, a jay knows when he is an ass just as well as you do—maybe better. If a jay ain't human, he better take in his sign, that's all."

Two separate stories are told to account for Mark's leaving Virginia City. His biographer, Samuel E. Moffett, gives this as the reason: "At that particular period dueling was a passing fashion on the Comstock. The refinements of Parisian civilization had not penetrated there, and a Washoe duel seldom left more than one survivor. The weapons were always Colt's navy revolvers—distance, fifteen paces; fire and advance; six shots allowed. Mark Twain became involved in a quarrel with Mr. Laird, the editor of the *Virginia Union*, and the situation seemed to call for a duel. Neither combatant

was an expert with the pistol, but Mark Twain was fortunate enough to have a second who was. The men were practicing in adjacent gorges, Mr. Laird doing fairly well, and his opponent hitting everything except the mark. A small bird lit on a sage brush thirty yards away, and Mark's second fired and knocked off its head. At that moment the enemy came over the ridge, saw the dead bird, observed the distance, and learned from Gillis, the humorist's second, that the feat had been performed by Mark Twain, for whom such an exploit was nothing remarkable. They withdrew for consultation, and then offered a formal apology, after which peace was restored, leaving Mark with the honors of war.

"However, this incident was the means of effecting another change in his life. There was a new law which prescribed two years' imprisonment for anyone who should send, carry, or accept a challenge. The fame of the proposed duel had reached the capital, eighteen miles away, and the governor wrathfully gave orders for the arrest of all concerned, announcing his intention of making an example that would be remembered. A friend of the duelists heard of their danger, outrode the officers of the law, and hurried the parties over the border into California."

The other story is as follows: "Mark Twain made neither money nor fame with the Comstockers. While his work was remarkable, there were so many more urgent things to attract attention that they had no eyes or ears for literature. Homicides of almost daily occurrence, tragic accidents, sensations in mining developments, surging stock markets, as Sam Davis puts it, smothered the lesser affairs of the ledge. But, he continues, 'One day a thing happened that changed the whole tenor of the life of the man who is now recognized as the dean of the world's humorists.'

"Clemens was standing on the corner of C and Union streets, when a mangy dog came up and rubbed its itching side against Clemens' leg.

"Sam did not move; he merely looked down and drawled out: "Well, if I've become a scratching post for Steve Gillis's dogs, I'd better hit the trail."

Whatever led him to San Francisco, it is known that he was gladly welcomed by the little coterie of literary Bohemians who were conducting the *Golden Era* and had just launched, under the pilotage of Charles Henry Webb, *The Californian*. This included Bret Harte, Noah Brooks, F. C. Ewer, Prentice Mulford, Rollin Daggett, Macdonough Ford, Ina Coolbrith, Charles Warren Stoddard, Joaquin Miller, Ambrose Bierce and others.

For six months he worked under George Barnes, the editor of the San Francisco *Morning Call*. And during this period he wrote quite a number of those shorter sketches which were afterward published in book form. Among these were "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man," "Concerning Chambermaids," "An Undertaker's Chat," etc. One of the most amusing of his burlesques was after the Pioneer's Ball in San Francisco. Following the fashion of those writers who describe the costumes of the ladies who attended, he brought forth a number of items, such as the following:

"Mrs. W. M. was attired in an elegant *pate de foie gras*, made expressly for her, and was greatly admired. Miss S. had her hair done up. She was the center of attraction for the gentlemen and the envy of all the ladies. Mrs. G. W. was tastefully dressed in a *tout ensemble*, and was greeted with deafening applause wherever she went. Mrs. C. N. was superbly arrayed in white kid gloves. Her modest and engaging manner accorded well with the unpretending simplicity of her costume and caused her to be regarded with absorbing interest by everyone.

"The charming Miss M. M. B. appeared in a thrilling waterfall, whose exceeding grace and volume compelled the homage of pioneers and emigrants alike. How beautiful she was!

"The queenly Mrs. L. R. was attractively attired in her new and beautiful false teeth, and the *bon jour* effect they naturally produced was heightened by her enchanting and well-sustained smile.

"Miss R. P., with that repugnance to ostentation in dress which is so peculiar to her, was attired in a simple white lace collar, fastened with a neat pearl-button solitaire. The fine contrast between the sparkling vivacity of her natural optic, and the steadfast attentiveness of her placid glass eye, was the subject of general and enthusiastic remark.

"Miss C. L. B. had her fine nose elegantly

enameled, and the easy grace with which she blew it from time to time marked her as a cultivated and accomplished woman of the world; its exquisitely modulated tone excited the admiration of all who had the happiness to hear it."

It must be confessed that this part of his life was neither profitable to him physically, mentally nor spiritually. While it is heresy for me, as a Californian, to say so, I do not think San Francisco was ever very beneficial to Mark Twain. In fact, no city ever was. He was never made to reside in cities. It was all right for him to go there once in a while to give out what he had received and absorbed, but his life of growth was always spent out in the open, in the large things of nature, like the Mississippi River, the great country he had crossed in the overland stage, and the wild, desert mining camps of Nevada and California.

It was at this time that he was seen one day on Clay and Montgomery streets, leaning against a lamp-post with a cigar box under his arm. The wife of Captain Edward Poole, a bright and witty woman, happened to be passing by and, noticing him, extended her hand with the salutation: "Why, Mark, where are you going in such a hurry?"

"I'm mo-ov-i-n-g," drawled Mark, at the same time opening his cigar-box and disclosing a pair of socks, a pipe and two paper collars.

. His next move was to leave San Francisco and go out into the majestic grandeur of the Sierra Nevadas. Here he came in touch with that large life of the mines and quaint humor of the miners which he so graphically pictures in his first acknowledged masterpiece, "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

Fortunately he was no more successful in the California mines than he was in Nevada, and it was on his return to San Francisco that this story was written. A well-known gentleman of San Francisco tells how he came to write it, as follows:

"Sometime in the latter part of the sixties I wished to see R. D. Swain, who was then the superintendent of the mint in this city. Bret Harte at that time was his secretary. Upon entering the office, I found that Mr. Swain was engaged, and

while waiting for him, Mark Twain came into the room. Mr. Clemens had just arrived in San Francisco from Nevada City, where a few days before he had witnessed the most curious jumping contest between two frogs, under the auspices of their respective trainers and in the presence of a numerous throng of spectators from all the mining camps around. While Mark Twain was telling the story, Mr. Swain opened the door of his private office and asked me to step inside.

"I remarked, 'Come out here, Swain, I want you to listen to this!'

"Mr. Swain accordingly joined our circle, and Clemens began his story anew. The story was told in an inimitable manner, and its auditors were convulsed with laughter. He described the actions of the trainers and bystanders, and used many expressions and colloquialisms which they had used. I think the story was more laughable as Mr. Clemens told it to us on that occasion than the one which afterward appeared in print, as the sayings and doings of the trainers and onlookers were indescribably funny. When the story was completed, Bret Harte told Mr. Clemens, as soon as he had recovered a little from the laughter which the story occasioned, and which was immoderate, that if he would write that account half as well as he had told it, it would be the funniest story ever written. Mark Twain took his advice, the story was put into manuscript form and afterward printed in the *Golden Era*. It attracted immediate attention, and has been pronounced one of the best short humorous stories extant."

The "Jumping Frog" at once gained him fame abroad as well as at home, but the world was not yet fully awakened to his ripening genius. The *Sacramento Union* then sent him to Hawaii to describe the country and especially the sugar plantations. Some of his letters at this time reveal his marvelous power of graphic description. These letters were so successful that they suggested the trip that led to the writing of the book that at once placed his fame where nothing could ever disturb or shake it. Time and future work might add to its glory and luster, but had he written nothing

but this one book he would always have ranked as the world's foremost humorist.

One of his best friends in San Francisco was John McComb, who so thoroughly appreciated Mark's literary and humorous ability that whenever the latter became despondent and wished to return to his own occupation of piloting on the Mississippi, he prevailed upon him to remain and stick to his writing.

It was through McComb that he was sent to Hawaii, and it was McComb that urged the *Alta California* to give him this new opportunity. A great deal of prominence was being given by the Eastern and other newspapers to an excursion that was being planned to leave New York in a steamer named the "Quaker City," which was to have advantages of Consular help and letters of introduction from the Secretary of State, etc., so that the excursionists would be afforded privileges abroad that no general American party had yet been accorded. The upshot was that Mark was sent on the excursion as the correspondent of this San Francisco paper, to which he was to write regular letters as the trip proceeded. These letters were published and produced quite a sensation. They were then made up into the book, "The Innocents Abroad," which in the hands of an enterprising publisher made a tremendous hit, over ten thousand copies being sold the first year.

My father must have purchased one of these early copies, for I well remember the occasion on which I first became familiar with the name of Mark Twain. I have elsewhere told the story as follows:

"It was in England, one cold winter's night. I was stretched out on a lounge, and near by, my father, near the blazing open fire, half reclining in his favorite chair—made after the style of a folding steamer chair—was reading 'Innocents Abroad.' Every few moments I would hear a gentle chuckle, or a quiet laugh and I knew it must be something very funny, when suddenly he dropped the book, burst out into a loud and long-continued strain of hearty laughter, at the same time sitting upright and rapidly running both hands through his hair, as he always did when delighted or ex-

cited. And I think he was both, for as he picked up the book and started to read again, down it would go, for his fit of laughter would start afresh, and each fit took several minutes to overcome."

Yet in California this book was but one of three that were all deservedly popular, and Clemens himself was placed in no higher position as a humorist than either of the authors of the two other books. These authors were John F. Swift, who, the year before, had issued his "Going to Jericho," and Ross Browne, whose books of travel, published by the Harpers, had given him world-wide fame. In reviewing Swift's book in one of the earlier numbers of the *Overland Monthly*, Bret Harte, whose critical judgment few could equal, said: "Mr. John Franklin Swift's 'Going to Jericho' is in legitimate literary succession to Howell's 'Venetian Life,' Ross Browne's 'Multifarious Voyages' and Mark Twain's 'Holy Land Letters.'" (These were not yet published in book form). "It is somewhat notable that three of these writers are Californians, and all from the West, with the exception of the first, who has an intrinsic literary merit which lifts him above comparison with any other writer of travel. Mr. Swift in some respects is superior."

Elsewhere a fine comparison is made by Harte of the work of these writers in reference to the "Sacred buildings and canvases of Europe." He said: "A race of good-humored, engaging iconoclasts seem to have precipitated themselves upon the old altars of mankind, and like their predecessors of the eighth century, have paid particular attention to the holy church. Mr. Howells has slashed one or two sacred pictorial canvases with his polished rapier; Mr. Swift has made one or two neat long shots with a rifled Parrott, and Mr. Mark Twain has used brickbats on stained-glass windows with damaging effect. And those gentlemen have certainly brought down a heap of rubbish."

"The Innocents Abroad" forever determined the career of Mark Twain. But in the meantime, while it was being issued, Mark returned to San Francisco, and the tide of prosperity not having yet turned his way and money being "needed

HOW MARK TWAIN WAS MADE

in his business," he determined to give a lecture. His wonderful combination of literary ability and business sagacity is well shown by the unique methods which he followed to secure an audience. The following notice appeared in the daily papers, and was also distributed as a circular all over the city:

HE MEETS OPPOSITION

San Francisco, June 30, 1868.

Mr. Mark Twain—Dear Sir: Hearing that you are about to sail for New York, in the P. M. S. S. Company's steamer of the 6th of July, to publish a book, and learning with the deepest concern that you propose to read a chapter or two of that book in public before you go, we take this method of expressing our cordial desire that you *will not*. We beg and implore you *do not*. There is a limit to human endurance.

We are your personal friends. We have your welfare at heart. We desire to see you prosper, and it is upon these accounts, and upon these only, that we urge you to desist from the new atrocity you contemplate.

Yours truly,

(Then followed a list of names of the best-known citizens of San Francisco, including W. H. L. Barnes, Rear-Admiral Thatcher, Noah Brooks, Major-General Halleck, Leland Stanford, Bret Harte, and concludes with "and 1500 in the steerage.")

To this he replied—and notice how he begins it—"to the 1500 and others."

San Francisco, June 30.

To the 1500 and Others: It seems to me that your course is entirely unprecedented. Heretofore, when lecturers, singers, actors, and other frauds have said that they were about to leave town, you have always been the very first people to come out in a card beseeching them to hold on for just one night more, and inflict just one more performance on the public; but as soon as I want to take a farewell benefit, you come after me with a card signed by the whole community and the Board of Aldermen praying me not to do it. But it isn't of any use. You cannot move me from my fell purpose. I *will* torment the people if I want to. I have a better right to do it than these strange lecturers and orators that come here from abroad. It only costs the public a dollar apiece, and if they can't stand it, what do they stay here for? Am I to go away and let them have peace and quiet for a year and a half, and then come back and only lecture them twice? What do you take me for?

No, gentlemen, ask of me anything else, and I will do it cheerfully but do not ask me not to afflict the people. I wish to tell them all I know about Venice. I wish to tell them about the City of the Sea—that most venerable, most brilliant and proudest Republic the world has ever seen. I wish to hint at what it achieved in twelve hundred years, and what it cost in two hundred. I wish to furnish a deal of pleasant information, somewhat highly spiced, but still palatable, digestible, and eminently fitted for the intellectual stomach. My last lecture was not as fine as I thought it was, but I have submitted this last discourse to several able critics, and they have pronounced it good. Now, therefore, why should I withhold it?

Let me talk only just this once, and I will sail positively on the 6th of July, and stay away until I return from China—two years.

Yours truly,

MARK TWAIN.

This letter immediately called forth further

OMINOUS PROTESTS

San Francisco, June 30

Mr. Mark Twain: Learning with profound regret that you have concluded to postpone your departure until the 6th of July, and learning, also, with unspeakable grief, that you propose to read from your forthcoming book, or lecture again before you go, at the New Mercantile Library, we hasten to beg of you that you *will not* do it. Curb this spirit of lawless violence, and emigrate at once. Have the vessel's bill for your passage sent to us. We will pay it. Your friends, Pacific Board of Brokers, Wells, Fargo & Co., The Merchants' Exchange, Pacific Union Express Co., The Bank of California, Ladies' Co-operative Union, S. F. Olympic Club, Cal. Typographical Union.

San Francisco, June 30

Mr. Mark Twain—Dear Sir: Will you start, now, without any unnecessary delay? Proprietors of the *Alta, Bulletin, Times, Call, Examiner, Figaro, Spirit of the Times, Dispatch, News-Letter, Golden City, Golden Era, Dramatic Chronicle, Police Gazette, The Californian, The Overland Monthly*.

San Francisco, June 30.

Mr. Mark Twain—Dear Sir: Do not delay your departure. You can come back and lecture another time. In the language of the worldly, you can "cut and come again." Your friends,

THE CLERGY

San Francisco, June 30.

Mr. Mark Twain—Dear Sir: You had better go. Yours,

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

DEFIANCE TO ALL

The climax of his "innocence" is reached in confounding the preparation for celebrating the "Fourth of July," with a public demonstration over himself. It was only "unavoidably delayed":

San Francisco, June 30.

Gentlemen: Restrain your emotions; you observe that they cannot avail. Read:

**NEW MERCANTILE LIBRARY
BUSH STREET**

THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1868

ONE NIGHT ONLY

FAREWELL LECTURE OF

MARK TWAIN

SUBJECT

**The Oldest of the Republics,
Past and Present VENICE**

BOX OFFICE OPEN WEDNESDAYS and THURSDAYS

NO EXTRA CHARGE FOR RESERVED SEATS

ADMISSION ONE DOLLAR

Doors Open at 7 Orgies Commence at 8 P. M.

On the public displays and ceremonies proposed to give fitting eclat to the occasion have been unavoidably delayed until the Fourth. The lecture will be delivered certainly on the 2nd and the event will be celebrated two days afterward by a discharge of artillery on the Fourth, a procession of citizens, the reading of the Declaration of Independence, and by a glorious display of fireworks from Russian Hill in the evening, which I have ordered at my sole expense, the cost amounting to eighty thousand dollars.

**AT THE NEW MERCANTILE LIBRARY, BUSH ST.
THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1868**

It is hardly necessary to add that the lecture was a success, *financially*.

Noah Brooks, in *The Century*, has this to say of Mark's lecture:

"Mark Twain's method as a lecturer was distinctly unique and novel. His slow, deliberate drawl, the anxious and perturbed expression of his visage, the apparently painful effort with which he framed his sentences, and above all, the surprise that spread over his face when the audience roared with delight or rapturously applauded the finer passages of his word-painting, were unlike anything of the kind they had ever known. All this was original. It was Mark Twain."

From this time on fame and fortune smiled upon him, except on the one occasion, when, through no fault of his own, his publishing firm failed and left him a legacy of a heavy debt. His heroic

shouldering of that debt and final payment of it stands side by side with the like heroic achievements of Sir Walter Scott.

His lecturing in San Francisco proved to be so successful that he was prevailed upon in 1873 to give a week's lectures in England under the management of George Dolby, who had managed Charles Dickens' lecture tour in America. The lectures were given in the Queen's Concert Hall, Hanover Square, and met with immediate and unbounded success. The engagement was prolonged, with the understanding that there was to be a brief interval to allow Mark to return to America with his wife.

In the meantime the first week's work was drawing increasingly large audiences, and London was going wild over the lectures of the man whose "Innocents Abroad" had so tickled their risibles.

During this very week Charles Warren Stoddard, one of his oldest San Francisco friends, reached London, sent to England as a special correspondent by the San Francisco *Chronicle*, and the day after his arrival, as he walked down the Strand, whom should he meet but Mark Twain? Mark seized him effusively, and scarcely had their friendly salutations been passed before Mark began to pour out his tale of woe. He was giving these lectures; they were financially successful; he needed the money and, therefore, was compelled to return to give them. But—and here he became almost frantic. His wife gone, he would be all alone in a great and strange city, and he would go crazy with the burden of homesickness that was falling upon him. The sight of his friend had suggested a relief to his woes. There was a clear way out of his difficulties. Charley must come and be his secretary, his companion, his anything, so that they could be together and Mark thus lose his homesickness. In vain Stoddard pleaded his contract with the *Chronicle*. "Never mind the *Chronicle*. Let them wait a while. I'll pay you as much or more than they, and all you will have to do will be to sit and listen to me when I talk."

The upshot was, Stoddard finally consented, and when Mark returned the two took up their quarters at the Lang-

ham, the well-known London hotel. Here they were very comfortably located, but Mark's peculiar nervousness used to begin to manifest itself every night about six o'clock. He must get ready. They must hurry up or they would be late. Why, why, wasn't Charley ready? At dinner, there was no pleasure in eating, as a few moments' delay longer than he expected, after giving the order, made Mark frantic. Long before necessary, Mark insisted upon starting for the hall, and as Charley said:

"I had a most uncomfortable time until I saw Mark walking onto the stage, while the audience clapped its welcome to Mark's invariable habit of washing his hands with invisible soap and water. As soon as he began with his 'Ladies and gentlemen,' I was content, and used to go quietly under the platform by a secret stairway to the Queen's own box, which was never used for any other person. It was, therefore, always kept closed with heavy velvet curtains, and, as there were plenty of cushions, I used to put them in order, stretch out and go to sleep, resting peacefully in the assurance that the clapping of hands of the audience at the close of the lecture would awaken me. Then, while Mark chatted with the audience and wrote his autograph in the albums of the young ladies, I would hurry back to the stage and be ready, when he was, to go to our hotel.

"There, with chairs wheeled up to the fire, with pipes and plenty of 'Lone Jack,' and certain bottles and glasses on the table, we would sit and chat, hour after hour, of things of the old world and the new. How the hours flew by, marked by the bell clock of the little church over the way! Almost immediately we were seated, Mark would say: 'Charley, mix a cocktail!' My reply was always the same, to the effect that I could not mix a cocktail. It required a special kind of genius which I did not possess, and so on. But Mark always insisted and I always yielded, while he slipped off his dress suit and shoes, and got into his smoking jacket and slippers. At the first sip he invariably twisted up his lips as though in disgust, smelled of his glass, looked at it, held it up between himself and the fire, and

then reproachfully gazed over toward me: 'What have you against me, Charley, that you concoct such an atrocious mixture as this? Of all the blim-flimmed, hoggetty-poggety, swish-swash I ever drank, this is the worst. I'll have to mix another to take the taste of this out of my mouth.'

"Yet he always drank the whole of what I had mixed—except, of course, what fell into my glass—and after we had had one of his mixing, and had chatted for an hour or so, I had to mix another. He complained of this—and drank it—and then mixed one himself to take away the taste of mine, and so it went on. One—two—three in the morning, chimed on a set of holy bells, and still we sat by the sea-coal fire and smoked numberless peace-pipes, and told droll stories, and enjoyed our seclusion.

"But there is a limit to the endurance of even a human owl, and I finally would get sleepy. And the funny thing was that the moment I began to get sleepy and talk of going to bed, Mark grew lonesome, homesick and lachrymose. As I undressed he would come and chat in my bedroom; as I got into bed he would sit down on my bedside, and by this time he had worked himself up into a fit of pessimistic depression which invariably took one turn. It was to the effect that he could clearly see ahead to a time when he could write no more, could not lecture, and then what 'would he and his family do for a living? There was nothing for it'—tears—"Charley, but the poorhouse." He could see that clearly enough, he would have to die in the poorhouse.

"To comfort him was impossible, and," said Mr. Stoddard, "I used to go to sleep night after night with that wail of woe in my ears—that Mark would die in the poorhouse.

"At last his engagement concluded in London, and we went here and there in the provinces, and finally reached Liverpool. We had a great night there. He was to sail the next day. Dolby (his manager) had been with us all the time, but had to leave that night for London, where he had a score of urgent matters demanding his attention. So I was left alone to see Mark off. That

night we made ourselves as comfortable as we could in the hotel, but instead of having a gay parting night, his doleful forebodings seemed worse than ever. I got into bed, as usual, and Mark came and sat by my side, and I was just about to drop off to sleep when, with a vigor and vim he seldom used, he sprang up and exclaimed: 'No, by George, I'll not die in a poorhouse. I'll tell you what I'll do, Charley, I'll teach elocution!'

"This awoke me, and I made some comment, when he broke in upon me and asked, 'Ever hear me read, Charley?' I answered 'No!' He then rang the bell and when the nightwatchman appeared, he asked in a most solemn voice, yet using words scarcely applicable to the sacred character of the book, for a copy of the Holy Scriptures. In a few minutes the boy returned, saying that he could not find a copy. Mark turned upon him with a mock ferocity that was as funny as anything he ever said in public, or wrote, and in apparent temper, wanted to know what he meant by daring to come and tell him that in that blankety-blank hotel he could not find a copy of the blankety-blank Holy Scriptures.

"In amazement, the boy returned to the search and soon came back with a copy of the desired book, and then, for over an hour, I lay as one entranced. You know, I have heard all the dignitaries of the Roman and English churches. I have listened to the great orators of Europe and America, but never in my life did I hear anyone read so perfectly, so beautifully, so thrillingly as Mark read that night. He gave me the whole of the book of Ruth, and half the time never looked at the page; and then some of the most exquisite passages of the book of Isaiah. Few people knew it, but he was more familiar with the Bible, and loved it better, than many of the professional religionists who would have deemed him far from a follower of its holy precepts."

This is the real version of Mr. Stod-

dard's story. He gives a briefer, a slightly different, and a fully expurgated one in his chapter, "A Humorist Abroad," in his "Exits and Entrances."

It was to his friendship with Charles Warren Stoddard, the California poet and litterateur, that the world owes one of the finest pieces of biography ever written and certainly Mark Twain's masterpiece, from a literary standpoint. I refer to his "Joan of Arc." I have told the story elsewhere and cannot repeat it here, but it seems to me that the American people have not yet arisen to the might and power of this wonderful story. In it Mark has put all the passion and power of his life. It is the sweetest, tenderest, most sympathetic, appreciative and yet sane and forceful piece of writing he ever did, and it gives one such a vivid picture of Joan of Arc that, forever, after reading the book, she stands forth to the reader as one of the illuminated personalities of literature, as well as of the world's history. If you have time to read but one book through this year, let that book be "Joan of Arc."

Hence it will be seen that Mark Twain really began his literary life in California. It was a Californian who prevented his leaving the field of letters, when, disheartened with his want of success in San Francisco, he wished to desert it. It was San Franciscan friendship that gained him the opportunities which enabled him to "make good" to the world of literature and established his fame. It was California and the great West that filled his soul with that large, vast, wide comprehension of things that has given his humor so broad a philosophy. It was California that first assured him of a welcome on the lecture platform, and it was Californian influence that, when all others had failed to encourage him to try serious work, finally overcame all obstacles and pointed out the way for the creation of his literary and biographical masterpiece to which I have so imperfectly and inadequately referred.

